

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Cannard's Grave (A37/A371),
Shepton Mallet, Somerset, 1994**

by

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation of land near the junction of the A37 and A371 (NGR.ST626421) (Fig. 1) was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit in January 1994. The work was commissioned by Somerset County Council to evaluate the archaeological potential of an area on the proposed route of the A37/A371 link road.

Excavations at Fosse Lane in 1990, and subsequent evaluations and geophysical surveys, have produced evidence for a substantial Romano-British settlement alongside Fosse Lane between Charlton and Cannard's Grave, as well as evidence of prehistoric activity (Leach 1991). An evaluation of land immediately to the east of this site, between Fosse Lane and the A37, in 1990 demonstrated the presence of prehistoric and Romano-British archaeological features and deposits (Leach, 1990). These discoveries suggested a high potential for the survival of archaeological deposits and features in the locality.

The Evaluation

The area for evaluation lay across the centre of a rectangular ploughed field between the A37 and A371, occupying a strip of land approximately 150 metres by 20 metres (Fig. 2). A series of trial trenches were excavated to assess the extent, nature and preservation of any archaeological deposits or features within the area to be affected by the proposed link road. A JCB-type mechanical excavator was used to remove the ploughsoil and expose the subsoil horizon. Any archaeological features exposed at that level were then to be cleared and sampled manually, and recorded as appropriate in accordance with the brief supplied by Somerset County Council (Brief for Archaeological Evaluation, A37/A371 Junction of Cannard's Grave, Somerset County Council, 1993).

Trench 1

This trench was aligned north-south, parallel with the western boundary of the field and was 37m long and 1.5m wide. The natural yellowish-brown clay subsoil (1001) was exposed 0.4m beneath the ploughsoil (1000), thinly sealing the weathered natural lias limestone bedrock (1002) along most of the trench. No archaeological deposits or features were encountered in this trench.

Trench 2

Aligned east-west this trench joined trenches 1 and 3, and was 107m long by 1.5m wide. The ploughsoil (2000) was 0.3-0.4m in depth and overlay the natural yellowish-brown clay (2001) which contained fragments of natural limestone. No archaeological deposits were encountered, apart from a series of modern land drainage ditches at almost 90° to the trench.

Trench 3

Aligned north-south, and joining trench 2, this trench was dug parallel with the A37 near the field boundary and was 62m long by 1.5m wide. The ploughsoil (3000) varied in depth from 0.3-0.4m and overlay the natural yellowish-brown clay (3001). No archaeological deposits were encountered.

Conclusion

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in any of the evaluation trenches. It was possible to mechanically clean and observe a horizon of natural buff-yellow clay subsoil at the base of the ploughsoil in all three trenches. The weathered surface of horizontally bedded lias limestone was visible in places beneath this clay subsoil, which was present only as a thin layer. Weather conditions at the time of the evaluation were generally poor and the ground water level was very high. Despite this factor, it was possible to verify that no archaeological features or deposits were present. This result appears to confirm previously negative results obtained here by geophysical prospection and fieldwalking. The latter has produced only post medieval finds (pottery, clay pipes, etc.) and occasional flint flakes. Furthermore, it is unlikely that archaeological remains recorded nearby to the east of this site in 1990 extend much further westwards.

Recommendations

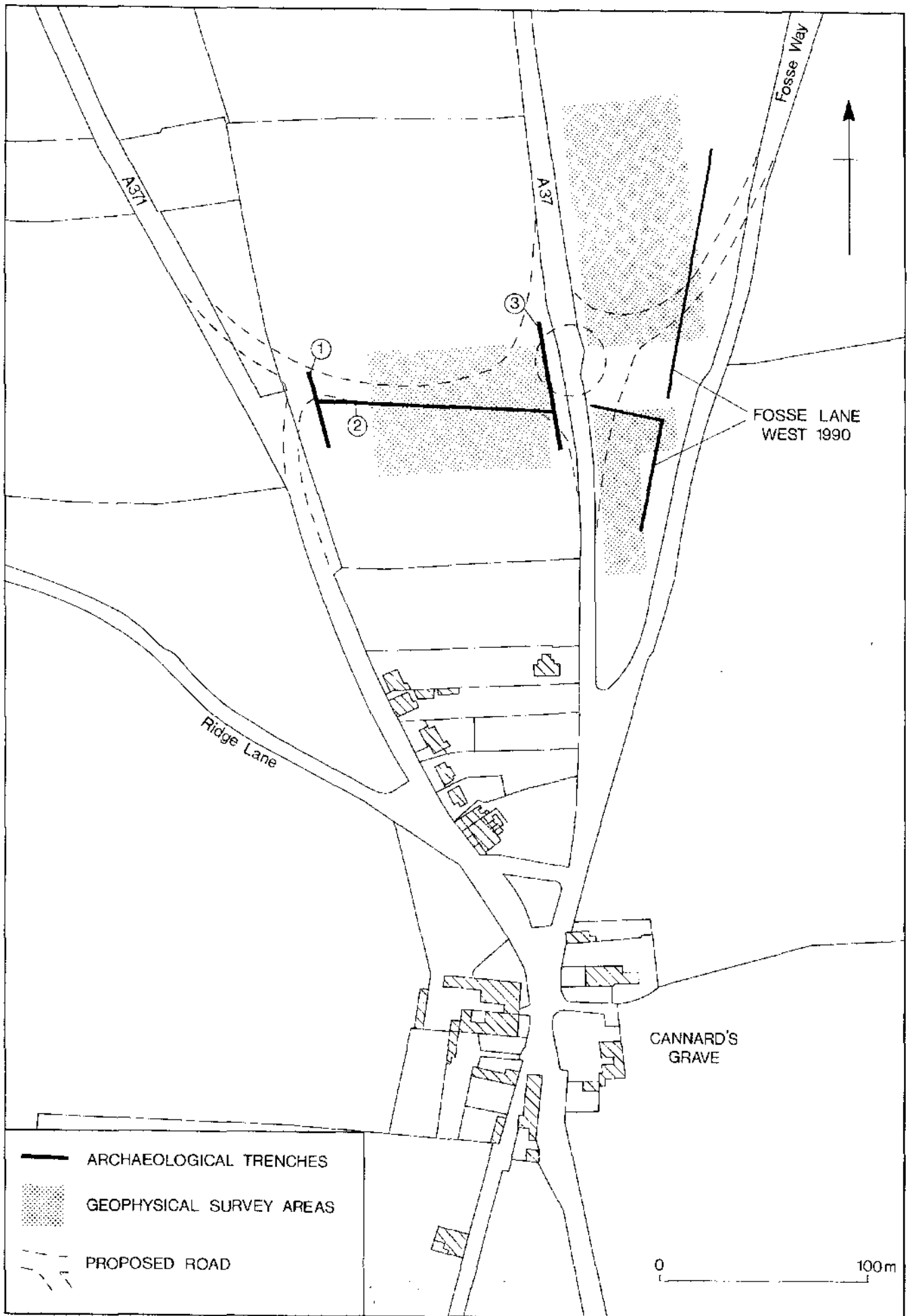
Although no archaeological features or deposits were located during this evaluation, the close proximity of prehistoric and Romano-British features to the east suggest that archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping prior to any construction works here is advisable.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Mr. R.A. Croft, County Archaeological Officer, Somerset County Council. The project was monitored by Peter Leach and supervised by Laurence Jones with the assistance of Ed Newton and Marianne Ridgway.

References

- Leach, P. 1990 An Archaeological Evaluation at Cannard's Grave (Fosse Lane West), Shepton Mallet. BUFAU Report 129
- Leach, P. 1991 'The Roman Site at Fosse Lane, Shepton Mallet' *Somerset Archaeology and Natural History* Vol. 134, 47-55.



Location of Archaeological Trenches

Figure 2

SHEPTON MALLET

Archaeological Investigations 1990~

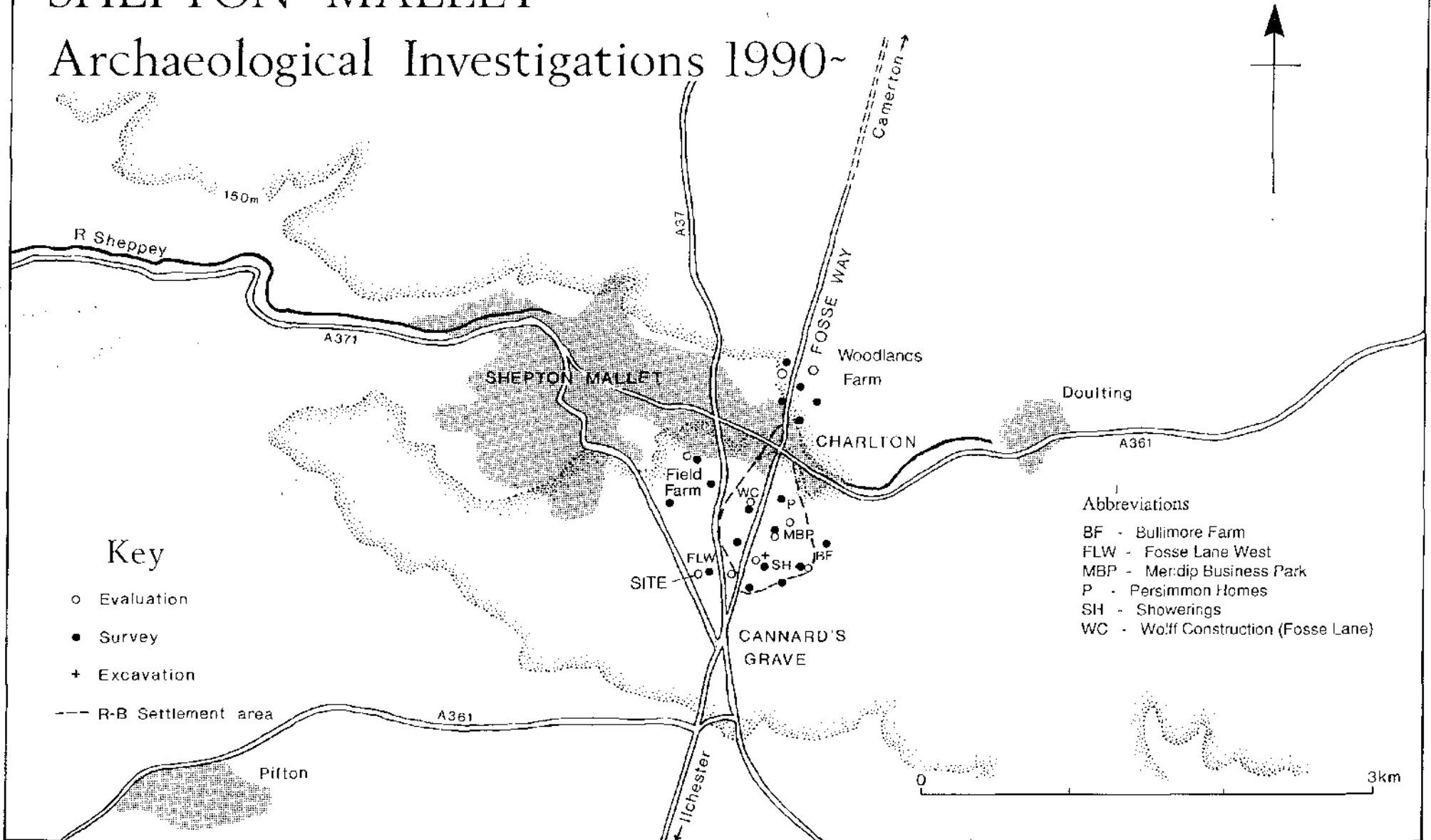


Figure 1